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**LOUISIANA STATE PARKS CELEBRATES THE NEW YEAR
WITH *FIRST DAY* HIKES ON JANUARY 1, 2012**

Louisiana State Parks is sponsoring free guided hikes at two parks on New Year's Day as part of America's State Parks' *First Day Hikes* project. *First Day Hikes* offer individuals and families an opportunity to begin the new year rejuvenating while connecting with the outdoors by taking a healthy hike on Jan. 1. *First Day Hikes* offer a great way to get outside, exercise and enjoy nature with friends and family.

"We are excited to host *First Day Hikes* as part of this national effort to get people outdoors and into our beautiful state parks," Stuart Johnson, assistant secretary of the Office of State Parks, said. "Hikes are a great way to cure cabin fever and burn off those extra holiday calories."

Park staff and volunteer will lead hikes at the following locations and times:

- **Lake D'Arbonne State Park** in Farmerville will host a hike at 1 p.m., beginning at the Visitors Center. The hike will include about a mile of park trails and conclude with questions and answers at the Visitor Center. Park staff will make maps, clean-up supplies and information about the park available to participants. The event should last between one and two hours. For more information call 318.368.6291.
- **Tickfaw State Park** in Springfield will host a hike at 10 a.m. at the Bottomland Pavilion. The 3-mile hike will follow the Tickfaw River. Participants will hike and discuss the sites along the way. Hikers are encouraged to bring water and wear hiking shoes. For more information call 225.294.2218.

Details about hike locations, difficulty and length, terrain and tips regarding proper clothing are listed on the America's State Parks website. Visit www.americasstateparks.org to find a First Day Hike nearest you.

“What better way to kick off the New Year than with a hike at a state park?” said Ruth Coleman, President of the National Association of State Park Directors (NASPD). “Think of it as the start of a new and healthy lifestyle for the whole family. Whether you’re staying close to home or traveling, join us at one of America’s State Parks on New Year’s Day.”

First Day Hikes originated over 20 years ago at the Blue Hills Reservation, a state park in Milton, Massachusetts. The program was launched to promote both healthy lifestyles throughout the year and year-round recreation at state parks. Many other states have offered outdoor recreation programs on New Year’s Day, however, this is the first time all 50 state park systems have joined together to sponsor *First Day Hikes*.

America's State Parks is committed to promoting outdoor recreation in state parks as a way to address obesity, especially among children. Getting kids outside and unplugged from video games and other electronic media creates a unique connection with nature that promotes physical and mental well-being and encourages creativity and stewardship of our shared resources.

“Studies have proven that getting outdoors is one good way to relax and recharge the body, mind and spirit.” stated Phil McNelly, NASPD’s Executive Director. “We hope that hiking along a trail in a state park will become part of an individual’s or family’s regular exercise routine.”

The mission of the NASPD and America's State Parks is to promote and advance the state park systems of America for their own significance, as well as for their important contributions to the nation’s environment, heritage, health and economy.

For more information on Lake D’Arbonne State Park, Tickfaw State Park or any other sites, please visit www.LaStateParks.com.

- www.crt.la.gov -